

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 L-03 SCA-01 PPT-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 FBIE-00 SY-05 DHA-02 /058 W

----- 092976

O 262335Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5361

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CARACAS 12667

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SOPN, VE, US

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF THREE U.S. BASED JOURNALISTS

REF: CARACAS 12608

1. EVENING OCT. 21, THREE JOURNALISTS FROM U.S. (HILDA INCLAN, JOHN ROTHCHILD, TAYLOR BRANCH) ARRIVED AT CARACAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ABOARD PANAM FLIGHT 441. ABOARD SAME FLIGHT WERE FOUR PERSONS REPRESENTING DADE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT, AND DADECOUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (CARACAS 12606). REPRESENTATIVE OF MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT WAS WARMLY GREETED BY REPRESENTATIVE OF DISIP (INTERIOR MINISTRY SECURITY SERVICE) WHOM TWO OF THE REPORTERS RECOGNIZED TO BE RICARDO MORALES NAVARRETE, A CUBAN EXILE, WHOM THEY HAD KNOWN IN MIAMI. HILDA INCLAN CLAIMS IN A STORY SHE WROTE IN MIAMI THAT HE WAS AN FBI INFORMANT WHO HELPED CONVICT ROLANDO OTERO AND ORLANDO BOSCH. TAYLOR BRANCH WAS QUOTED IN THE PRESS IN MIAMI AS IDENTIFYING MORALES AS A FORMER CIA AGENT AND ONE-TIME FBI INFORMANT.

2. THE REPORTERS APPROACHED MORALES AND GREETED
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HIM BY NAME. HE DENIED BEING MORALES AND SHORTLY

AFTER DEPARTED THE AIRPORT WITH THE 4 LAW ENFORCEMENT MEN FROM MIAMI. THE REPORTERS THEN APPROACHED THE IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES AND RAN INTO TROUBLE. INCLAN IS A CUBAN NATIONAL WHO IS A PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIEN IN THE U.S. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER SHE PRESENTED AN INS PERMIT TO REENTER WITH A TOURIST VISA STAMPED THEREIN, OR WHETHER SHE PRESENTED AN ALIEN REGISTRATION CARD WITH A TOURIST VISA ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER. IN ANY EVENT, SHE WAS TOLD THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS WITH HER DOCUMENTATION AND WAS ASKED TO REPORT TO DISIP (MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SECURITY SERVICE) THE FOLLOWING MORNING. REPORTEDLY, SHE INSISTED LOUDLY THAT HER DOCUMENTATION WAS IN ORDER AND REFUSED TO AGREE TO CALL AT DISIP. SHE ALSO REFUSED TO SIGN A RECEIPT FOR THE SUMMONS. THE OTHER REPORTERS, ROTHCHILD, A FREE-LANCER AND TAYLOR BRANCH OF ESQUIRE, SUPPORTED HER OBJECTIONS. THEY WERE ALSO ASKED AND REFUSED TO REPORT TO DISIP THE NEXT MORNING. LIKE INCLAN, THEY REFUSED TO SIGN THE RECEIPT. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THE THREE WERE ADMITTED INTO VENEZUELA AND LEFT TOGETHER IN A TAXICAB TO THEIR HOTELS. INCLAN BELIEVED SHE HAD A RESERVATION AT THE CARACAS HILTON, AND WAS DROPPED THERE. BRANCH AND ROTHCHILD CONTINUED TO THE AVILA HOTEL WHERE THEY HAD A ROOM. BRANCH HAS TOLD OTHER REPORTERS THEIR CAR WAS FOLLOWED FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE AVILA HOTEL. AT THE CARACAS HILTON, INCLAN WAS INFORMED SHE DID NOT HAVE A RESERVATION AND SHE WENT TO THE AVILA HOTEL, WHERE SHE WAS UNABLE TO GET A ROOM. REPORTEDLY, SHE SPENT THE NIGHT ON A COUCH IN THE AVILE HOTEL.

3. ABOUT 0530 HOURS ON OCTOBER 22, THE THREE REPORTERS WERE REPORTEDLY AWAKENED BY DISIP AGENTS AND TAKEN BACK TO THE AIRPORT. THE REPORTERS CLAIM THAT MORALES WAS PRESENT AT THE AVILA HOTEL THAT MORNING. AT THE AIRPORT, THE THREE WERE LOCKED IN A ROOM AND TOLD THEY WERE TO LEAVE ON THE 1000 HOURS VIASA FLIGHT TO MIAMI. THEY REFUSED AND MADE CONFIDENTIAL

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A GREAT DEAL OF NOISE, REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTING TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF OTHER PASSENGERS AT THE TERMINAL IN THE HOPE THAT THEY MIGHT CONTACT THE U.S. EMBASSY. REPORTEDLY BECAUSE THE PILOT OF THE VIASA PLANE REFUSED TO CARRY PASSENGERS AGAINST THEIR WILL, THE VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES DESISTED FROM FORCING THEM TO LEAVE ON THE VIASA FLIGHT. BY THEN THE REPORTERS DECIDED IT WOULD

BE ADVISABLE IF ONE OF THEM FLEW TO MIAMI TO INFORM
THEIR EMPLOYERS AND THE AUTHORITIES OF THE SITUATION.
ACCORDINGLY, ROTHCHILD FLEW TO MIAMI ON THE
10:00 A.M. FLIGHT. INCLAN AND TAYLOR WERE INFORMED
THAT THEY WOULD BE OBLIGED TO TAKE THE 3:30 P.M.
PANAM FLIGHT. AFTER DECIDING THERE WAS NO FURTHER
POINT IN RESISTING, THEY DEPARTED FOR MIAMI ON THAT
FLIGHT.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 L-03 SCA-01 PPT-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 FBIE-00 SY-05 DHA-02 /058 W

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INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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4. OTIS WRAGG, CITY EDITOR OF THE MIAMI NEWS, HAS
CALLED AT THE EMBASSY SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THE INCIDENT,
ASKING WHAT THE EMBASSY INTENDS TO DO ABOUT IT.
HE WAS TOLD THE EMBASSY WAS LOOKING INTO THE
MATTER, AND SUBSEQUENTLY WAS GIVEN THE
EXPLANATION OFFERED BY THE ACTING FOREIGN
MINISTER AS REPORTED IN REFTEL.

5. LOCAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER DAILY
JOURNAL FIRST BROKE STORY IN CARACAS ON
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, RECOUNTING ESSENTIAL
DETAILS AS MENTIONED ABOVE, AND STATING THAT THE
THREE JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN FORCED TO LEAVE VENEZUELA.
THE STORY STATED THAT THE DISIP SOURCES DENIED
KNOWLEDGE OF THE EVENT, AND NEITHER INTERIOR
MINISTRY OR CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION (OCI)
SPOKESMEN COULD BE REACHED FOR COMMENT EVENING

OCT. 22. EVENING OCT. 23, OCI SPOKESMAN GUILLERMO TELL TROCONIZ WAS QUOTED IN TV DENYING THE THE JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN EXPELLED, BUT THAT THERE WERE "IRREGULARITIES" IN INCLAN'S PASSPORT. HE ADDED THAT THERE IS FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN VENEZUELA AND THAT FOREIGN JOURNALISTS COULD WORK THERE FREELY. OCI SPOKESMAN WAS ALSO QUOTED TO THE EFFECT THAT U.S. EMBASSY WOULD ISSUE A STATEMENT ON THE MATTER. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. ON OCT. 24, DAILY JOURNAL AND MOST CARACAS DAILIES CARRIED MAJOR STORIES, SOME OF THEM FRONT PAGE, BASED PRINCIPALLY ON AP STORY OUT OF MIAMI, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE THREE JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN EXPELLED FROM VENEZUELA AFTER RECOGNIZING A FORMER CIA AGENT AND FBI INFORMANT AS SECOND IN COMMAND OF VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE.

7. UNOFFICIAL MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SOURCES WERE ALSO QUOTED IN OCT. 24 PRESS CONFIRMING THAT MORALES HAD WORKED FOR ONE OF THE VENEZUELAN SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS, BUT THAT HE HAD NOT ORDERED THE EXPULSION OF THE THREE JOURNALISTS.

8. EVENING OCT. 25, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE WHICH WAS CARRIED ON TV BUT BURIED IN MAJOR DAILIES ON OCT. 26. PRESS RELEASE STATES THAT GOV ENIES INTERNATIONAL PRESS DISPATCHES THAT THE THREE JOURNALISTS WERE EXPELLED FROM VENEZUELA AFTER IDENTIFYING A FORMER CIA AGENT AND FBI INFORMANT AS SECOND OF COMMAND OF VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE. RELEASE EXPLAINS THAT INCLAN WAS ASKED TO APPEAR BEFORE DISIP TO DISCUSS HER TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION, BUT REFUSED. TWO U.S. CITIZEN JOURNALISTS THEN EXPRESSED SOLIDARITY WITH HER AND WERE ALSO ASKED TO GO TO DISIP, WHICH THEY ALSO REFUSED. IN VIEW "OBSTINATE REFUSAL" THESE FOREIGNERS TO OBEY REQUEST MADE BY GOV OFFICIALS ACTING IN ACCORDANCE EXISTING LEGAL PROVISIONS, THEY WERE ASKED TO LEAVE COUNTRY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. RELEASE THEN GIVES TIME OF THEIR DEPARTURE AND AIRLINES USED, BUT DOES NOT MENTION THAT VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES AWAKENED THE JOURNALISTS EARLY ON OCT. 22 AND TOOK THEM TO THE AIRPORT WHERE THEY WERE KEPT LOCKED UP AND INCOMMUNICADO UNTIL THEIR DEPARTURE. COMMUNIQUE STRESSES THAT IT IS "ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE" THAT RICARDO MORALES NAVARRETE IS THE SECOND MAN IN CHARGE OF

VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE SINCE "HE DOES NOT EVEN
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WORK IN DISIP." COMMUNIQUE CLOSES BY STRESSING
THAT GOV RESPECTS FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND TO
RECALL THAT AT NO TIME HAS GOV PROHIBITED FOREIGN
JOURNALISTS FROM VISITING COUNTRY OR INTERFERED
IN THE FORWARDING OF THEIR INFORMATION TO THEIR
EMPLOYERS. COMMUNIQUE ASSERTS THAT IN THIS CASE
AN ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURE WAS TAKEN AGAINST THREE
FOREIGNERS WHO REFUSED TO COMPLY WITH LEGAL PRO-
VISIONS IN FORCE IN VENEZUELA.

9. DCM SPOKE TO GOMEZ MANTELLINI, ACTING
FOREIGN MINISTER, ON OCT. 23 AS REPORTED IN REFERENCE.
HE SPOKE TO HIM AGAIN MORNING OF OCT. 26, STRESSING
THAT THE STORY WAS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE IN THE
U.S. AND VENEZUELA AND EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT THE
HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH OF THE AUTHORITIES. AMBASSADOR
DISCUSSED INCIDENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AFTERNOON OF OCT. 26,
STATING HE COULD UNDERSTAND VENEZUELAN DECISION
TO EXPEL NEWSMEN FOR NOT COMPLYING WITH
LEGAL REQUEST MADE BY GOV. HOWEVER, HE ALSO
ASKED FOREIGN MINISTER TO CLARIFY WHETHER
JOURNALISTS WERE IN FACT AWAKENED AT
0530 ON OCT. 22 BY GOV OFFICIALS AND WHETHER
THEY WERE KEPT LOCKED AND INCOMMUNICADO AT
AIRPORT UNTIL THEIR DEPARTURE AS CLAIMED.
FOREIGN MINISTER PROMISED TO LOOK INTO IT AND
RESPOND.
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Message Attributes

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